

BIBLICAL SUPPORTS FOR WOMEN MARRYING YOUNGER MEN

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The idea of women marrying younger men is becoming popular in our days, but its acceptability has been strongly challenged. It is not really a big deal in the western world, but it is a big deal in some places in Africa. It still remains a strange and unacceptable idea in Africa and everyone seem to envisage nothing more than problems in such union. My question is: what is actually wrong with such a union? Does the Bible support such marriage? Is there any guarantee for success in such a union or everyone should expect problems in the long-run? Come with me as I make my opinion known to you in this article.

Things are changing, paradigms are challenged, and values have been distorted in the name of freedom. Is freedom actually the permission to do what we want to do or it is the liberty to do what we *ought* to do? In my opinion, I think the latter is correct. Freedom is the liberty to do what is ought to be done. However, in regard to age differences between couples in marriage, what is the ideal? Is there any standard to follow in regard to age differences among couples? Does age really change anything or affects anything?

To start with, it is a generally accepted norm in almost every human society that men (husbands) should be older than their wives. This is not because God gave a specific instruction concerning this, but it has been an acceptable practice among men throughout history. You might want to say but God created man first, and that should be a precedence we must follow in marriage. Yes, you are right by saying God created the man first and He made him the head of the family. But may I ask you to tell me the age difference between Adam and Eve. I guess you cannot be so sure, and I believe God did not create any other thing after the sixth day. Therefore, Adam and Eve could have been created the same day. That is by the way.

Like I said earlier, it is a generally accepted norm that men should be older than their wives. But what should be the age difference between them? No specific age

difference. However, my focus actually is to create a balance here and to help those who are in such relationships where the woman is older than the man to actually get things right.

Several relationships where the woman is older than the man - especially in Africa - are facing rejections, oppositions, and mockery because people feel such relationships are against norms, and they should not be accepted. In fact, some people chose to call it a 'taboo'. Like I said earlier, this may not really be an issue in the Western world, because of the 'anything goes' kind of life people live over there and the freedom of choice the constitution has given everyone. But if you think you feel good with such relationship, isn't it still good to wait a minute to count the cost? Please don't get me wrong; I do not say it is evil for a woman to marry a younger man, but I think it is advisable for both parties to critically count the cost first. I understand that love transcends all the mockery, rejections and any ugly thing you might face, yet there is need for critical consideration.

According to 2012 Census Bureau data, 85.9 percent of husbands are older than or about the same age as their wives. That leaves 14.2 percent of all husbands who are at least two years younger than their wives. Two important questions we must ask ourselves are: Is there any danger in such a marriage where wives are older than their husbands? What is the role age is playing in making the marriage work? Before we answer the above question, let's consider some of the excuses people give for rejecting such unions.

Below are some of the excuses people give for rejecting such unions:

1. **Cultural Excuses:** It is against our culture and tradition, they often say. People tend to disagree with such union because it is not an acceptable practice in their culture. To make things worse for the lovers, the people would announce a terrible consequence that will befall anyone who acts contrary to the acceptable norms within that culture. Cultural beliefs may be a major barrier to such a union. However, some cultures are more flexible than the others. Cultural beliefs might be one of the strongest arguments against this kind of union. However, along with cultural beliefs of the people involved in this union is the *Consensus Gentium* of the people within the culture where the relationship is taking place. *Consensus Gentium* is from the Latin word meaning the agreement of the people. It is an ancient criterion for decision making among a group of people who practices the same culture. *Consensus Gentium* is also referred to as the climate of opinion, community sentiment, general belief, conventional wisdom, prevailing sentiment, etc. *Consensus Gentium* therefore carries a

weight of authority in decision making, especially among those who have cultural affiliations. Consequently, if the union is against the community sentiment or the general belief of the people, they may likely raise their eyebrows against such union.

2. **Religious Excuses:** I read a blog post of recent of a young lady who is deeply in love with a younger man, but her mother-in-law to be insisted that they would never marry each other because there is no place in the Bible to justify such a practice. The lady voiced out to see if anyone can actually help her find a place in the Bible to support her relationship with her lover and to convince her mother-in-law. This is a serious issue. She is not the only one having such experience. I know of two people who are also deeply in love with each other, but also have a similar story. The lady is 30 while the guy is 28. The mother of the lady and her pastor had insisted for over three years now that they would not support such union. The pastor also said there is no place in the Bible where such happened. Well, if that's what you are passing through too, I am here for you. I can help you out by the grace of God. Religion is also a strong factor in this kind of relationship. We are intrinsically religious, especially in Africa. Therefore, if such a practice or any practice is against the ethos of the religion, it will be challenged, discouraged and disallowed.

3. **Biological/Physiological Excuses:** if you are a woman and you marry a younger man, you will soon look older than him, and you may not be attracted to him again. That's what people will tell you. For the woman, she may have to put more efforts to be able to meet the sexual need of her husband. She gets tired after a very hectic day, she goes to prepare dinner for her family, and her husband needs her in bed. You can imagine how tired she would be after a very hectic day and also attending to domestic works, and yet, her husband needs her in bed. Research has shown that men want sex three times more than women. He wants it almost every day, but she is too tired, and you must also consider her age too. As her age increases, her strength begins to decline. In some cases sexual intercourse can even become painful for older women, and stress may lead to frigidity. Stress makes sex life suffer; it can lower your sex drive.

According to a recent medical research, cougar dating will increase the mortality rate of the women involved. Although, scientists had done great jobs in helping older people to continue to experience an active sex life. The truth is that some are not even aware of this new development. So if she could not meet her husband's sexual need, she may have to share her husband with a younger lady somewhere. Aside that, some people feel older women may not be as romantic and sexy as young ladies would. Although, this assumption has greatly

been contested by medical experts, but when we look at the matter holistically, the two parties (those who believe older women are not romantic and those who say they are sexually active even at old ages) are making sensible points – it's just a matter of perspectives. As she gets older you begin to notice wrinkles on her face, her boobs becoming saggy, and other physiological changes that may vastly make younger men to prefer younger ladies to older ones begin to occur in her. These are some of the biological or physiological excuses people give for discouraging such peculiar unions. These excuses may look flimsy to some people, but I feel there is still need for a critical consideration of the whole matter.

4. **Attitudinal Excuses:** this is the excuse that she would not be submissive to her younger husband. I personally believe that submission and respect are not the functions of age; they are issues with personalities. Although, the consciousness of the age difference among the two lovers may affect their attitudes to each other. But I suggest that the older woman should be ready to give up her age, so to say, and willingly accept the headship of her younger man. She must always remember that she is not his mother, but a wife. If she had agreed to be the wife of a younger man, then she must put on the attitude of submission, humility and respect for her younger husband.

5. **Social Excuses:** this is the excuse that she may not really be as social as younger ladies would. They will definitely have difference social preferences. That aside, you as a younger man, will you really feel at home with her friends and colleagues whom you know are older than you and they are your wife's friends? These are the excuses people often give for rejecting such unique marriages. I call it a "unique marriage".

What is the role age is playing in making marriage work? Can we find a support in the Bible for this unique marriage? What should be the age limit? Is there any danger involved if a woman marries a younger man? These are the few questions I want to briefly answer in this article.

Let me start with the first question: what is the role age is playing in making marriage work? Age in my opinion, is not one of the major factors that determine whether a marriage will be successful or not. It does play a significant role, no doubt. However, in true friendship, age does not really count. Nobody emphasizes who is the oldest. Rather, the two people involved in the friendship just relate freely, not emphasizing seniority or superiority. This should be the same in the marriage where love reigns.

What determines headship in any human society is not always age; it is the role the individual recognized as the head plays at the time that makes him the head. For instance, I

am a Pastor; a young pastor, and at least 40 percent of my congregation is far older than me, yet I am the head. I am the head (the leader) simply because of the role I play in the church. The same goes to the marriage where the woman is older than the man. In this kind of marriage, the man still plays the role of a husband, while the woman plays the role of a wife. No one can reverse the order. No matter the age difference, no culture, tradition or people will ever give the role of a husband to the woman because she is older.

Similarly, the man does not become the husband because he is older; he is the husband because he is the man of the house and that automatically makes him the head. Therefore, age does not determine the success of any marriage; maturity, love and understanding do. Age is just the chronological gap between the two people.

Question two: can we find anything to support this kind of union in the Bible? I would say YES! I guess this is strange to you. Let me put you through some mental puzzles. But I can't find anything like that in the Bible, you say. I will show you soon. Just go along with me.

In Deuteronomy 25:5, Moses said, "If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her" (NIV). This is called "Levirate Marriage." It is the custom of a widow marrying her deceased husband's brother or sometimes a near heir. It was a practice among the Jews. Now let's take our first example of such. Genesis 38 records that Judah has three sons: Er, Onan, and Shelah. Er married Tamar, but Er was wicked in the LORD's sight, so the LORD put him to death. Therefore, by custom, Onan would marry Tamar in order to fulfill his duty to her as a brother-in-law to produce offspring for his brother Er. Onan also did what was wicked before the LORD, so the LORD put him to death too. Since Onan could not produce an offspring for his late brother, then Tamar should be given to Shelah to marry.

Now listen to what Judah said in verse 11: "Judah then said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Live as a widow in your father's house *until* my son *Shelah* grows up." (Emphasis added). This text suggests to us that Shelah could have been younger than Tamar, but custom makes it mandatory for Shelah to marry Tamar. A paraphrase: Judah said to Tamar, relax! The young man is yours, but he is still very young for that now. Live in your father's house *until my son Shelah grows up*. Judge for yourself now from what you've read above. Who is older? It is crystal clear that Tamar would be older than Shelah if they eventually got married.

Example two: Luke Chapter 20:27-36 records a fantastic discussion between the Sadducees and Jesus. It is also about levirate marriage. The Sadducees quoted Deuteronomy

25:5, and sought Jesus' opinion on the text. Let's go through the discussion carefully. Verses 29 to 31 reads: "*Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. The second and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children.*" You will observe that Jesus never told the Sadducees that such marriage is wrong – I mean levirate marriage. Now here is the point: We do not have a command in the Bible regarding the age gap that should be between husbands and wives. However, for the sake of this discussion, let's make Abraham and Sarah our case study.

Abraham was about ten years older than Sarah. Genesis 17:17 reads: "Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" So let's take the age difference between Abraham and Sarah as the standard they followed in their days. In other words, we want to assume that in their days, a man must be at least ten years older than his wife. Now let's consider the age gaps that will be among children in the days of Bible characters.

We cannot be too sure of the age gaps among children in the Bible days, but let's take Moses and Aaron as the standard. Exodus 7:7 records that Aaron was three years older than Moses. So, for the sake of this discussion, let's assume that there was always three years interval between siblings in the Bible days. Now let's go back to Jesus' discussion with the Sadducees.

Let's assume that the first husband was ten years older than his wife. Now he has six younger brothers. He died childless and tradition says the younger brother marry his wife – levirate marriage. Now, by the assumption above, the younger brother would be at least three years younger, and the same goes on and on like that. If the woman could not have a child through the first of the six surviving brothers, she goes to the next, until she has a child through any of the six brothers.

Let's assume that she bore no child for the first four out of the six, and there were three years interval each among the brothers, then she would go to the fifth. Now, how old will the fifth brother be? That means the woman will be five years older than the fifth brother. Do you understand? I suggest you go through the thought above again. Subtract three from ten in five places; the answer you get is minus five. This means the woman would be five years older than the fifth brother.

My Reservations: I really want to express my reservations for this kind of marriage. I have read several blog posts on the internet about women marrying younger men. They all claimed to be deeply in love with one another, but I think there is still need for thoughtful considerations in this matter. In some of the posts I read earlier, I read of some women who

married men who are 10 years, 15 years, and even 20 years younger than them. I think such age gaps are outrageous, crazy, ridiculous and weird. I perceive that in most cases, what could lead to such marriage includes: lewdness, lust, infatuation, frustration, wrong self-judgment, selfishness and greed. Pretense is not far from such union.

From my observations, I deduced that most of the men who agreed to go into this kind of marriage are up to something. Perhaps the woman has what he is desperately in need of. In most cases the woman carries the greatest burden and pays the highest price in order to ensure the marriage works. She is always afraid of losing her younger husband to younger ladies in the future. The early days of their marriage may look rosy and fantastic, but as year passes by, fear sets in. The younger man begins to see the falling physique of his older wife and as a result, the older spouse may no longer look appealing to him. As she's growing older, you begin to see wrinkles all over her face, her boobs becoming saggy and a lot of physiological changes begin to occur in her. Can you imagine how a woman who is 15 years older than her husband will be in 15 years' time? A study had shown that women who are seven to nine years older than their husbands have a 20% higher mortality risk than if they were the same age.

Come on! Let's be realistic; such age gaps (10, 15, 20 years older) are crazy and ridiculous. They may both enjoy the euphoria of love in the early days of their marriage, but as year passes by, these realities will be done on them. Remember the old saying: "If love is a dream, marriage is the alarm clock."

However, I understand that love transcends all these inadequacies, but love does not deny reality. The marriage can still work in spite of the vast age differences, but much effort is needed. The bottom line is that the duo should carefully count the cost and not be carried away by the fantastic illusion that surrounds love. I am not trying to dethrone love; love is a key and indispensable factor that determines the success of any marriage. However, there is need for the couple to consider their choices again.

Therefore, this is my submission: there is nothing actually wrong with women marrying younger men, if they both feel good about it. What matters is love and understanding. If you are in it already and you feel okay with it, go ahead and enjoy the cruise. If you are just coming into it, consider your choice critically and allow God to guide you. If you are deeply and sincerely in love with each other, but the female counterpart is older and you are confused if the Bible supports such a practice, I think I have been able to help in that. The Bible does not give us any instruction regarding age difference, and I do not think such is

against the scriptures. It is all your choice; but your choice needs to be given a critical consideration.

FIVE WARNINGS FOR WOMEN DATING YOUNGER MEN

- 1. Do not do it out of frustration or desperation:** many of the women who goes into such relationship do so simply because of frustration and desperation. Perhaps they think they are already getting older and they may be left unmarried. As a result, they accept any man who comes their ways and who seems to be meeting their emotional needs. Another reason why older ladies may agree to marry younger men can be due to their past ugly experiences. Perhaps they've once loved and trusted a particular man and he jilted them. As a result, when younger men come their ways and they feel they (the younger men) are responsible and they can fill the vacuum their 'exes' left, they might give the younger men the chance to come into their lives to merely play the substitutionary roles. If you marry because of frustration or desperation, you may end up marrying a mere 'service provider' and not a loving husband. A 'service provider' is there only to meet your emotional and sexual needs. Having rendered the service for which you allow him into your life, what happens next? Think about that. Marrying out of frustration or desperation is unhealthy and it can be hazardous.
- 2. Do not go into dating for sexual reason only:** some older ladies are of the opinion that younger men will be more sexually active and romantic than older men. This may not be true in all cases anyway. Having sexual satisfaction has more to do with enlightenment and experience. It is possible for the younger man to have more strength and energy than the older one, but if he lacks the skills involved in giving sexual satisfaction, he may just expend his energy and still not satisfy her woman. That is by the way. There is more to love and marriage than sex. Now I want you to know that this article is not written for those who women who hang around younger men just for the fun of it or merely to use the younger men as their sex machine. I am addressing those who are seeking to enter into lifelong marital relationships. Therefore, my advice to you older ladies who are in love with younger guys is that you dare not enter into a lifelong commitment with him mainly for sexual reasons – not because you need someone to gratify your sexual desire.
- 3. Carefully weigh the Pros and the Cons:** no doubt, every marriage has its own challenges and monsters to conquer. However, there is need to critically and honestly

consider the ‘Pros’ and the ‘Cons’ before going into such marriage. This kind of marriage has its own share of problems and its peculiarity will inevitably open it up to several challenges. According to a recent research, women who marry men seven to nine years their juniors have a 20 per cent higher mortality risk than women who marry men their own age. Marrying a younger man may keep your feeling young, but he might be hard to relate to on the other hand. Because of the age disparity, both of you may not have many life experiences in common and this may prove difficult to find common ground to stand on. I am of the opinion that there are certain things books will not teach you; it takes age and experiences to know them. Therefore older ladies or women may have difficulties in relating with their younger men at some points. Enlisting the Pros and the Cons of this kind of union is not the main focus of this article. Therefore, I enjoin those involved in it to weigh the beautiful and the ugly side of the union before diving into it. How long will the love last once buttocks sag and double chins set in? This involves not only the older woman now, but both the younger man and the older woman.

4. **Never compare him with your Ex:** it is certain that older ladies must have been in some relationships in the past, and with each relationship comes different emotional, social or sexual experiences. Perhaps the younger man seem not to measure up with your ex or exes in some areas; it is unhealthy to compare him with them. You must be willing to accept him as he is and patiently walk with him until he could meet some of your expectations – don’t expect him to meet all your expectations. That may not be realistic.
5. **Do not treat him as your younger brother; treat him as your husband:** avoid the temptation of wanting to treat your younger man like a younger brother. He is not a younger brother as long as marriage is concern. Though the age gap may be vast, but when it comes to marriage, the man assumes the responsibility of the head. Regardless of the age difference between both of you, he deserves respect and adoration from you. You must be submissive to him as a matter of necessity, so that both of you can have a joyous and enduring marital experiences. Finally, before you dive into this marriage, you must remember that there are prices to pay, challenges to face, things to endure, and as you know, the Bible does not support divorce under any circumstances except for marital unfaithfulness. Therefore, critically count the cost, be sure your man is ready and willing to stay with you and remain faithful to your marital vows even when double chins sets in, your breasts become saggy and your

buttocks also sags. Do not shy away from this reality, because dating a younger man can make you feel like you are in a vocation from reality. Always remember the old saying: "if love is a dream, marriage is the alarm clock."

Perhaps your marriage is falling apart and you have tried all you could to keep things together, but you keep seeing your efforts becoming futile, I will like to introduce you to the greatest and matchless mender. His name is JESUS. He can heal the brokenhearted, restore love and peace to your home, deliver your spouse from drugs and porno- addiction, show the way to make things work for you, and ultimately, He wants to save your soul from hell.

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Say this prayer with me: Lord Jesus, I thank you for your love for me and for shedding your blood to save me. Jesus, today, I confess you with my mouth that you are my Lord and Savior, and I believe that God raised you from the dead. Jesus, save my soul, save my marriage, and make me yours forever. Thank you for saving me. Amen! If you have said this prayers, congratulations! Locate a Bible believing church you can attend, and make your Bible your daily companion. Shalom!

ABOUT AUTHOR

Ebenezer Afolabi is the Pastor of Foursquare Gospel Church Hallelujah Quarters in Ibafo, Ogun state, Nigeria. He is a sound teacher of God's word, a worship leader, songwriter, and a passionate defender of the Christian faith. His common slogan is, "God is still in the business of working miracles". This expression is based on his many experiences of the supernatural power of God in his life and ministry. He has authored four books which include *God Can Be Funny*, *Defending What You Believe*, *Biblical Support for Marrying Younger Men* and his latest book titled, *Careless Wives, Unfaithful Husbands*.

You can also get a copy of *God Can Be Funny* and other books written by Ebenezer Afolabi from www.amazon.com

